

## CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

<b>Project Name:</b>	LUL #3073269, Digging and placing two ground water monitoring wells.
<b>Proposed Implementation Date:</b>	Winter 2014
<b>Proponent:</b>	City of Choteau, PO Box 619, Choteau, MT 59422
<b>Location:</b>	NE4SE4, Section 36, T24N, R5W SE4SE4, Section 36, T24N, R5W
<b>County:</b>	Teton
<b>Trust:</b>	Common Schools

### I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The City of Choteau has applied for a Land Use License for the purposed of digging and placing two ground water monitoring wells. Each well will consist of a hole dug 12' deep, placing a 4" PVC pipe in the hole, and then backfilling the hole. These test wells will allow the City of Choteau too monitor the ground water levels. Minimal impacts to the environment will occur as the digging of the monitoring wells will only impact a very small amount of surface area.

### II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

#### 1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

*Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.*

City of Choteau-Proponent  
Higgins/Bunn Ranch Partnership, Surface Lessee, Lease #3877  
DNRC-Surface Owner

#### 2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

#### 3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the City of Choteau permission to dig and place the two ground water monitoring wells.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the City of Choteau permission to dig and place the two ground water monitoring wells.

### III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

#### 4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

*Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.*

The proposed action will only require minimal surface disturbance. The wells will be dug, the 4" PVC placed, and the site will be backfilled and reclaimed immediately. Minimal disturbance will occur once the wells are placed as they are monitored. Existing roads will be used and no off road traffic is needed as the wells are next to an existing road.

#### 5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

*Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.*

There are numerous water rights associated with this tract. The proposed action will not have any other affects on the quality, quantity, or distribution of water resources in the area as LUL #3073269 authorizes digging and placing the two ground water monitoring wells. The two ground water monitoring wells are to be used only for monitoring, which will have no effect on the existing water rights. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

#### 6. AIR QUALITY:

*What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.*

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

#### 7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

*What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.*

Vegetation will be minimally impacted as the two ground water monitoring wells are placed. The wells will be installed by the utilization of a backhoe. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the proponent is responsible for controlling weeds within the construction areas. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of smooth brome 20%, timothy 20%, orchard grass 20%, tall fescue 20%, and alfalfa 20%. If drilled the rate will be 8#/acre and if broadcast the rate will be doubled.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

#### 8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

*Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.*

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover.

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**9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:**

*Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.*

The tract is located in the NCD grizzly bear recovery zone. Grizzly bears will not be impacted by the project because construction will occur next to existing roads and the two ground water monitoring wells will be immediately reclaimed. Threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern or potential species of concern will not be impacted by proposal.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T24N, R5W. There were four animal species of concern, five potential species of concern, and one special status species noted on the NRIS survey: Birds-Ferruginous Hawk, Great Blue Heron, Bobolink, McCown's Longspur, Short-eared Owl, Hooded Merganser, Eastern Bluebird, and Bald Eagle. Fish-Brook Stickleback and Brassy Minnow. This particular tract of grazing land does not contain many, if any of these species. Threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern or potential species of concern will not be impacted by the installation of the two ground water monitoring wells.

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**10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:**

*Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.*

The proposed construction areas are located in tame pasture, which has been previously disturbed, so no historical, archaeological, or paleontological resources would be present.

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**11. AESTHETICS:**

*Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.*

As the two ground water monitoring wells will only consist of a 4" PVC pipe sticking out of the ground next to an existing road, the aesthetic character of the land will not be altered.

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**12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:**

*Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.*

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

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**13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:**

*List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

There are other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed in this EA. The City of Choteau is proposing to build a sewer lagoon in this area and need to monitor the ground water in order to determine the feasibility of the proposed project.

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**IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION**

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

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**14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

*Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.*

The proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

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**15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:**

*Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.*

The results of this project will not affect the industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production in the area.

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**16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:**

*Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.*

This project will not create any new jobs, as the project will be completed in house by the proponent.

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**17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:**

*Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.*

The proposed action will not affect the tax base or tax revenues.

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**18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:**

*Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services*

This project is of a small scale and being funded by the City of Choteau. There will be no excessive stress placed of the existing infrastructure of the area.

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**19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:**

*List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

The proposed action is in compliance with Federal, State, and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

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**20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:**

*Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.*

This tract is legally accessible via county roads and a state highway. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on this state tract.

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**21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:**

*Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing*

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

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**22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:**

*Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.*

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

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**23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:**

*How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?*

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

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**24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:**

*Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.*

This project will benefit the school trust in terms of a \$25.00 fee generated from the LUL application. The annual fee for LUL #3073269 will be \$100.00 per year for the one year term of the license for a total of \$125.00. Cumulative impacts are not expected as the area is only used for agricultural and grazing. The two ground water monitoring wells will not affect long term viability of agriculture and grazing on the tracts.

<b>EA Checklist Prepared By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Tony Nickol	<b>Date:</b> January 17, 2014
	<b>Title:</b> Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

## V. FINDINGS

### 25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the City of Choteau permission to dig and place the two ground water monitoring wells.

### 26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

No negative environmental impacts are expected. Following testing, pipes will be removed and the surface will be reclaimed.

### 27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

<b>EA Checklist Approved By:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Erik Eneboe
	<b>Title:</b> Conrad Unit Manger, CLO, DNRC
<b>Signature:</b> 	<b>Date:</b> January 22, 2014

